

Message Text

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ACTION SS-15

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TAGS: PFOR, TGEN, ENRG, UR, US

SUBJECT: SOVIET NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY: DISCUSSION WITH SCAE

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN MOROKHOV

REFS: (A) MOSCOW 4541, (B) MOSCOW 4997,

1. FORMER ACDA OFFICIAL MASON WILICH, PRESENTLY DIRECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION, PASSED POLITICAL COUNSELOR 4/15 FOLLOWING MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION ON DISCUSSION HELD 4/14 BETWEEN WILICH, ALEXANDER TROWBRIDGE, VICE-CHAIRMAN ALLIED CHEMICAL CO. AND MR. I.D. MORKHOV, FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE COMMITTEE ON ATOMIC ENERGY (SCAE). WILICH AND TROWBRIDGE WERE IN MOSCOW AS MEMBERS OF THE U.S. DELEGATION TO THE U.N. ASSOCIATION TO DISCUSS ECONOMIC AFFAIRS WITH THE SOVIETS. TEXT FOLLOWS:

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2. BEGIN TEXT. MOROKHOV CHARACTERIZED CARTER APRIL 7 NUCLEAR POWER POLICY AS "FORCED POLICY ARTIFICIALLY TIED TO NPT."

MOROKHOV SAID NUCLEAR POWER CANNOT BE DEVELOPED WITHOUT PLUTONIUM. USSR HAS LOTS OF URANIUM RESOURCES. THEREFORE, USSR PROCEEDING TO DEVELOP NUCLEAR POWER IN TOW STAGES. STAGE ONE (UP TO 1990) INVOLVES USE OF THERMAL NEUTRON REACTORS. PROGRAM CALLED FOR 20,000 MW INSTALLED CAPACITY BY 1980 AND 80,000-

100,000 MW BY 1990. AFTER 1990 FURTHER EXPANSION WILL BE BASED ON FAST BREEDER REACTORS. MOST OF THE WORK DONE SO FAR ON SODIUM COOLED REACTOR TECHNOLOGY, BUT ALTERNATIVES BEING EXPLORED.

3. REGARDING REPROCESSING, MOROKHOV SAID SOVIET PROGRAM INVOLVED RECOVERY OF PLUTONIUM AND URANIUM FROM SPENT FUEL OF THERMAL NEUTRON REACTORS. SOME PLUTONIUM IS BEING RECYCLED EXPERIMENTALLY IN THERMAL NEUTRON REACTORS, BUT MAIN PROGRAM IS STOCKPILING IT FOR SUBSEQUENT USE IN FAST BREEDER REACTORS.

4. MOROKHOV SAID SOVIETS HAD NO DOUBT ABOUT FAST BREEDER REACTOR SAFETY AND RELIABILITY BASED ON ACCUMULATED EXPERIENCE. SAID AMERICAN PROGRAM HAD NOT SOLVED PROBLEM OF LOW DOUBLING TIME, WHEREAS SOVIETS HAD. HE ACKNOWLEDGED SOVIET PROBLEMS WITH STEAM GENERATORS IN EXISTING DEMONSTRATION PLANT.

5. AS TO RADIOACTIVE WASTE DISPOSAL, MOROKHOV SAID THIS WAS "ONE OF THE PRIMARY PROBLEMS" REMAINING. SOVIETS HAD DUMPED "SEVERAL THOUSANDS" OF CUBIC METERS OF LIQUID HIGH-LEVEL WASTE INTO HOLES DEEP UNDERGROUND. EVIDENCE INDICATED MIGRATION HAD BEEN VERY SLOW. NOW SOVIETS WERE DEVELOPING VITRIFICATION.

5. REGARDING SPENT FUEL STORAGE, MOROKHOV SAID SOVIET EXPERIENCE WAS THAT, IF FUEL ELEMENTS WERE NOT RUPTURED, STORAGE UP TO TWENTY YEARS SEEMED POSSIBLE. IF FUEL CLADDING HAD BROKEN DOWN, HOWEVER, PROBLEMS WOULD BE ENCOUNTERED IN STORAGE WITHIN TEN YEARS OR LESS.

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6. REGARDING SOVIET NUCLEAR EXPORT POLICY AND DISCUSSIONS AT THE LONDON SUPPLIERS CONFERENCE, IT WAS SOVIET POLICY TO REQUIRE SAFEGUARDS IN ALL NUCLEAR FACILITIES IN THE RECIPIENT COUNTRY, OR FULL FUEL CYCLE SAFEGUARDS, CONSISTENT WITH THE POLICIES OF CANADA, SWEDEN, U.K. MOROKHOV EXPRESSED SOVIET AMBIVALENCE TOWARD ISSUE OF EXPORTS OF SENSITIVE FUEL CYCLE TECHNOLOGY. ON ONE HAND, SOVIETS WERE NOT IN FAVOR OF SUCH EXPORTS. ON OTHER HAND, THEY OPPOSED A FLAT PROHIBITION ON EXPORTS OF SENSITIVE TECHNOLOGY BECAUSE THIS MIGHT STIMULATE INCENTIVE TO ACQUIRE SUCH TECHNOLOGY WITHOUT SAFEGUARDS. SOVIETS ALSO FAVORED CONCEPT OF MULTINATIONAL FUEL CYCLE CENTERS AS MEASURES TO REDUCE PROLIFERATION RISKS.

7. REGARDING SOVIET EXPORT POLICY SPECIFICALLY, MOROKHOV SAID THERE IS NO POLICY AGAINST EXPORT OF PLUTONIUM BEARING FUEL TO COUNTRIES WHERE APPROPRIATE SAFEGUARDS APPLIED, BUT THERE IS ALSO NO PRACTICE YET OF HAVING DONE SO.

8. REGARDING EFFECTIVENESS OF IAEA SAFEGUARDS, MOROKHOV SAID

AGENCY AT PRESENT TIME IS NOT ABLE TO CARRY OUT ADEQUATE CONTROL, BUT THAT RECENT REPORT OF SEVEN WISE MEN (HE BEING ONE) INDICATED PERIODIC INSPECTION FOR SMALL SCALE PROGRAMS AND PERMANENT INSPECTION FOR LARGE SCALE PROGRAMS COULD PROVIDE BASIS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE APPROACH.

9. WILICH AND TROWBRIDGE BOTH HAVE IMPRESSION MOROKHOV QUITE CONFIDENT ABOUT FUTURE OF SOVIET PROGRAM AND RELAXED ABOUT HAVING NUCLEAR POWER POLICY THAT DIVERGES FROM U.S. POLICY AND IS CONSISTENT WITH POLICIES OF OTHER NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS ASIDE FROM THE U.S. END TEXT.

10. COMMENT. MOROKHOV'S STATEMENTS CONCERNING SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD PLUTONIUM CYCLE AND GENERAL NUCLEAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT POLICY ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE REPORTED BY EMBASSY PREVIOUSLY (SEE REFTEL A). OF INTEREST IS STATEMENT THAT THE SOVIETS ARE EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES IN SPENT FULE STORAGE TECHNOLOGY. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THIS MAY BE SIGN THAT THE SOVIETS WILL HAVE POSITIVE RESPONSE TO U.S. PROPOSAL FOR COOPERATION IN THIS AREA UNDER THE ATOMIC ENERGY BILATERAL (SEE REFTEL B). END COMMENT. TOON

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